

CHRONICLE AND COMMENT OF THE STAGE

"Tiger Rose"

Elements When Properly Harnessed Prove to Aid Mightily in the Success of Performance at Lyceum Theatre

By Heywood Brown

DAVID BELASCO has made a success of "Tiger Rose" by saving his ammunition. He has introduced repression into the field of melodrama. It is true, perhaps, that the repression of the performance at the Lyceum Theatre is not close kin to nature. Sometimes, as in the case of the acting of William Courtleigh, it fairly shrieks aloud, but the fact remains that by keeping both feet on the soft pedal Mr. Belasco is able to gain a smashing effect when he cuts loose.

The producer strikes with lightning. There is little doubt in our mind that the storm of the second act of "Tiger Rose" is the chief factor which has sent the play thundering along as the biggest success of the season. It is the best of all stage storms we have ever seen. It is a reckless night and yet an accommodating one. Every flash serves to light some telling bit of action. Naturally enough, the spoken portions of the play go for little during the sway of the wind, the lightning and the rain, but Mr. Belasco was probably correct in supposing that he could be more eloquent with his electricity than Willard Mack with his words.

It would be unfair, however, to pass slightly over Mack's share of the credit. In addition to writing the play he acted the chief male rôle during the original production, and played it well. His successor, Bernard McEwen, gives an effective performance. It is a little better vocally than pictorially, but it suffices well enough.

The values of Mack's play do not lie on the surface. It is practically devoid of style, and yet it has outlasted many better written plays because it has a definitely sympathetic quality. After all, the majority of theatregoers do not actually hear lines. Or, at any rate, nobody takes a play phrase by phrase. Each spectator, to a large extent, translates the spoken line immediately in his own mind. If he is properly attuned to the performance he gets a reaction which is largely emotional. A cheap line may be defined in this process of transmission. Consider, for instance, the emotion aroused by a popular war song. Certainly there was nothing fine about the words of "Tipperary," and yet it sufficed to dignify the deaths of many men. The drama was often transmuted as the words were carried from the conscious to the subconscious mind.

In a lesser degree Mack has done this miracle in "Tiger Rose." Though the words which he puts into the mouths of his characters are largely without distinction, he has managed to attain at many places rare emotions. The play has genuine feeling at its best points. The plot, of course, is thoroughly conventional. Lenore Ulrich is the playwright's chief aid in the cast. She gives a genuine and passionate performance. She is able to put herself into the part without recourse to any conscious mental effort, which is almost always inimical to good acting.

We are gradually coming to the belief that playing on the screen requires a greater amount of cerebration than acting on the stage. This does not imply that it is a higher art. We don't think it is, but it is to our mind much more technical. There is more to feel for the stage and more to learn for the screen. The fact that in the moving picture theatre we see only the image of the actor lessens the effect of personality a little bit. The current between actor and audience is missing. The player cannot feel his way to certain effects. He must think them out. He must consider the limitations of the camera. It is impossible for him to lose himself in a performance as an actor on the stage may do. His work, as we say, requires more thought, but it also consumes less emotion. It is more largely a matter of rules and less a matter of art. Perhaps that is why persons can be trained to act for the screen, while they must grow to act on the stage.

We visited the Century Roof for a second time a few nights ago and found it one of the most delightful midnight entertainments yet devised. It has all the pace and spirit so necessary in a postscript performance. We took away this impression in spite of the decidedly difficult condition under which the performance was given. The house seemed to be filled with a number of strangely subdued gentlemen from out of town. We were told that they were members of the United States Senate and House and that they had come on to New York for the Loyalty Parade. All seemed unduly conscious of the fact that they were public men in a public place. When a chorus girl in the performance of her duty tried to powder the nose of a Senator, he dodged. Even the House members were afraid to let other chorus girls read their palms in a gypsy number. Indeed, one member of the visiting delegation left the theatre because the chief comedian began a song entitled "Oh, What I Know About You!"

All our old favorites of burlesque and vaudeville and musical comedy have been displaced by the Dooleys. In the realm of purely physical funmaking these young gentlemen of the roof seem to be without rivals.

New Frolic Features

In carrying out his time-honored policy of varying the programme of the Ziegfeld Midnight Frolic on the New Amsterdam Theatre Roof, Mr. Ziegfeld announces for Monday Bert Williams, who for many seasons appeared with the Follies, in a new monologue and songs; Bee Palmer, a singing and dancing soubrette and pianist of unusual magnetism; the introduction of a tank or armored car in action, manned by the Ziegfeld Beauties, with an effective cannonade of the audience, the missiles being favors and souvenirs; also new songs on timely topics.

Ziegfeld Reports Progress in War On Speculators

Calls Attention to Line That Is Continually at His Box Office

The following letter was written by Mr. Ziegfeld in answer to the defence of ticket speculators printed last Sunday:

Three weeks and five days have passed since I inaugurated my fight against ticket profiteering, and the gross takings of the "Follies" for that period are \$103,732, the government receiving approximately \$9,430 for that period. It is with regret that in an article printed in one of the morning papers interviews with other managers showed them lukewarm in their attitude and remarks regarding the abolishing in New York of ticket profiteering. Their attitude evidently was the fear that their attractions could not withstand the adverse criticisms of their performances by the hotel speculators and agencies—that the fear of hot weather and war conditions might mean personal loss in case their eighteen front rows were not in the hands of the speculators through advance buy-outs.

If these managers could see the continuous line at the New Amsterdam box office and read the thousands of letters that I have received from my patrons they would know that the public has realized that the time has come when all managers must prevent their tickets from getting into the hands of the profiteers and the increase in their patronage will more than compensate them for the loss of their rake-off in dealing with speculators instead of direct with the theatre-going public. The managers are and have been too closely allied with the ticket profiteers for their own good. The managers, I consider, are greatly to blame for driving the public away from the box office. The cry too long has been "the best we have is the eighteen row," no matter for what week or day or show ahead, the purchaser wanted his ticket. They concluded, "Why go to the box office when you can't get what you want?"

"The best we have is the eighteen row" is the leading theme of the day. We are giving our all to fight for it beyond the big pond. Why not establish it honestly in our home institutions? The theatre has done its bit in every other direction; why not make every person equal to the others for seats? Against the greatest odds I am glad to say I have successfully sold 80, as far as tickets for the "Ziegfeld Follies" and the "Ziegfeld Midnight Frolic" are concerned. Only this week I have turned down a buy-out of 475 seats a night at a profit to me of over \$10,000. The buy-out assured me against any loss during the hot weather. I admit I am not in the theatre business for my health, but I honestly believe the ticket profiteering, if continued means death to the theatre.

Theatre tickets bought of speculators and hotel agencies have risen in price beyond the public purse, and I appeal to every citizen in these war times to use every effort in his power to stamp out ticket profiteering in all branches, and amusements which the public must have in these strenuous times should be placed on the wings of democracy and every one should have an equal chance to buy tickets at the theatre box office at box office prices. A speculator quotes in the morning press that certain terms were demanded by me through a supposed representative of mine. I have no representative, nor has any one the authority to speak for me. I speak for myself at all times. The demand for the "Follies" seats and for other big successes became so big that the public wanted them at any price, and the hotel agencies and speculators took that as their cue and raised the price. I demanded that if the agencies were given any seats for this year's "Follies" seats should be the limit premium over the box office price stamped on the ticket, because I fully realize the advantage to an attraction, especially during the summer months when the city is filled with strangers who apply at the hotels for information regarding amusements and theatres, but this was not agreeable to the agencies and speculators, who so long have had their own way that they have begun to run wild, and they themselves by their own avarice have killed the goose that laid the golden egg. I decided to take the great chance of fighting the well fortified profiteers, and give the public the advantage of getting seats at box office prices, of which I am glad to say they have taken full advantage.

One curse we are obliged to fight, and which under the present laws it is impossible to stamp out, which is known as "digging"—when speculators send strangers to the box office to secure seats which are sold to them supposedly for themselves but are in reality turned over to speculators. They get in line and buy tickets and

we have no means of knowing them. The public, for stop ticket profiteering, over night, if they would refuse to attend any theatre where tickets cannot be bought direct at the box office. Alderman Quinn's ordinance, brought before the City Council at my request, if passed would stamp out ticket speculation in New York, as it has in other cities, and any one having any power should work for it, and I am sure that all managers that have real attractions that the public want to see know that it is to the interest of the theatre to protect the public and see that their patrons can get their tickets at box office prices.

The management of our big hotels of our great city, who I admit derive great benefit from the ticket agencies placed in their lobbies, could greatly help the present state of affairs by compelling these agencies to sell their tickets at a premium of not more than five cents over the box office price, but whether this ordinance is passed or not, tickets for "Ziegfeld Follies" are on sale and will be until the finish of the "Follies" run in New York, the 18th of September, and every seat from the first to the last row is on sale to those who come to the box office for them.

The theatres are compelled by the United States to stamp on each ticket the price at which that ticket is sold, and what I can't understand, or perhaps it has been overlooked, or Uncle Sam, is why that same law does not apply to the ticket profiteer. Why is he allowed to take the very same ticket on which the price is stamped and sell it for more than the price stamped on its face? This is a phase of the controversy which has not been brought up. Believe me, I am in this fight to the finish, and if Alderman Quinn's ordinance is not passed, I am going to ascertain why the ticket profiteer has privileges that are denied others. In a communication from District Attorney Swann, I am glad to learn he considered ticket speculation a non-essential industry, and the full resources of his office will be used under the anti-lodging law to stamp out every phase of it that his authority empowers him. Last Saturday night in evidence on Forty-second Street and the "diggers" were apprehended. The ticket speculator openly boast that I cannot let them throughout the summer without them but I believe the time has come when the public is awake on this subject and will not further tolerate it, and will refuse to attend those theatres which allow their tickets to fall into the hands of the agencies. A combination of manager and ticket speculator against the public is not tolerated in any other city. Why not now to wipe it out forever in New York and protect the public and amusement-seeking strangers who come to this great city for their entertainment?

For the sake of the future of the theatre, the conditions prevailing in the New Amsterdam Theatre should be the rule at every theatre in New York City. Yours to command,

Gertrude Vanderbilt
cavorts joyfully
on the Keith Circuit.

Lillian Lorraine and
Frank Carter in the
Follies' Garden of Dreams.



The
"American
Beauty"
Mollie
King,
joins
the
Century
Grove
Revue
to-morrow
CAMPBELL
STUDIOS PHOTO

Michio Itow's Good Deed

The Japanese Dancer Has Introduced Two Specimens of the Native "Noh" Drama of Antiquity to This Country

By Solita Solano

While the Japanese theatre produces the plays of Shakespeare, Shaw, Wilde, Hauptmann, Ibsen and Yeats, America knows nothing of the drama of Japan except what Michio Itow has been able to show in two presentations of the "Noh" drama. The first, "Tamara," Itow gave in February at the Neighborhood Playhouse. The second, "At the Hawk's Well," had a single performance last Wednesday evening at the Greenwich Village The-

ter was admired in Bolm's Ballet. In time, gave me luncheon the other day in a Japanese restaurant in Thirty-ninth Street, a place not at all resembling a chop suey headquarters. There one ate of many delectable dishes, including one known as "the moon of the plain of Musashi." The reader will be disappointed to learn that the "moon" is but the well known poached egg of the American breakfast table and that it tops such unoriginal edibles as chicken livers and vegetables. Between cups of tea Itow explained the changes that have taken place in the modern Japanese theatre since I was in that charming corner of the Orient. Later he told the extraordinary tale of himself in English that is only three years old, but marvellously adequate.

At fifteen he studied dancing at the school attached to the Imperial Theatre at Tokio, the city of his birth. At that age he was considered idle, and even naughty, by his parents. This opinion was brought on by his superfluous energy. A well behaved Japanese child is always repressed in behavior and expression, but constant chidings made no difference to Itow, who could not seem to arrange his life along static lines. In sheer shame for what the neighbors were saying, the family sent the youth to Dresden to study, and there he remained until he was twenty-one and the war broke out.

Itow escaped to Holland two days before Japan declared war on Germany. From Berlin to London he flew, and decided he had had enough school and that he would henceforth earn his own living. Without considering how this was to be accomplished he wrote his decision to his father and spent his last remittance in a defiant round of "parties." Then commenced a period of rigor, in which he learned the ways of pawnshops.

Thus, one winter's evening Itow found himself owing four weeks' rent and his possessions reduced to one old suit (made in Japan), twenty neckties (of German and English origin) and a stomach (empty). Still undaunted, he went out and pawned the ties, receiving six coppers for the lot. He bought bread and mixed it with water. Then he went to bed to keep warm and ponder on his difficulties. Presently there came a knock at the door. A noted painter whom he had met at the Café Royal entered.

"Come and dance at Lady Cunard's party," he invited. Itow explained his condition. The painter waved aside all objections.

"And so," related Itow, "with a black silk handkerchief my sister had given me when I left Japan serving me for a necktie and in that terrible suit, and without an overcoat, I went along. When I saw the butler at the door, his gold trimmings and white silk stockings, my heart failed me. But my friend dragged me in. I was taken to the costume room, where I put on Turkish trousers and a Spanish coat. In this I danced until I had no more strength. A tall man with white hair took me aside and asked me my ideas on the modern theatre. I asked to be excused, as I had no English, only German. He laughed and said we would forget the war. We talked German together for two hours that night.

"The next morning came a knock. 'My God, the landlady wants her money again,' I thought, and called out to my wife still in bed. But she burst in, crying 'Have you seen the papers?' She spread them out, and there was my name in big type and the story of how I had danced before Prime Minister Asquith and London society the night before. Another knock at the door and there was a letter from Mr. Asquith enclosing £20. It was he, the Prime Minister, to whom I had talked in German the night before!"

Itow then had an enormous success in London, dancing at private houses and being taken up by Lady Cunard and Lady Paget. Twice he danced before the Queen, who gave him a card-case as a mark of her appreciation. One day an American manager called him an offer, and Yeats advised Itow to take it, as the war was interesting London more than the theatre. So Itow came to America on the next boat. A representative of the manager met him at the pier. The representative was chewing gum. Itow begged to be taken to a theatre that night to see a sample of American art. The representative didn't mean to be clever, but he took Itow to the legitiest show on Broadway.

Soon rehearsals began of the play in which Itow was to make his American debut. Then he discovered the "play" was a musical show about two couples who exchanged mates and that he was to give his artistic dances in front of two beds! Itow voluntarily released the manager from his contract.

Michio Itow and his friend and counsellor, Kosak Yamada, think of founding a school of modern Japanese dancing in New York the coming season. Japanese dancing in the strict sense of the word will not be taught, for the art of Itow is universal and in many ways his own. Acting, speaking, singing and moving will be in the curriculum, also.

With the standards of his country's drama before him, Itow regards most of the actors of Broadway as amateurs. "They cannot sing and dance and act all three—therefore they are amateurs," he asserts. I left him without asking what he thought of the "movies" as an art.

The Busy Selwyn Co. Builds Theatres Between Productions

The firm of Selwyn & Co., with three new theatres now under construction, is planning an active season, starting early next month. The activities of the firm not only include the opening of the new playhouses, the production of several new plays and road tours for many of their last season successes, but will see the executive offices

of 105 feet and runs through to West Forty-third Street, where its frontage is about 75 feet.

"Rock-a-Bye Baby" will continue at the Astor through the summer, and then, after a short tour of the so-called subway circuit, will go either to Chicago or Boston to continue its run. "Why Marry?" by far the most successful play of its type seen in New York last year, and incidentally awarded the Pulitzer prize by Columbia University as the best play by an American produced during the year, will resume its run early in August, at Denver. The tour will include nearly every large theatrical centre in the country.

The first of the new Selwyn plays to be seen in New York will be "Double Exposure," by Avery Hopwood, which will open next month. About the same time two companies will be sent on tour in "Fair and Warmer."

The new Selwyn Theatre, in West Forty-second Street, will be opened early in September, with Jane Cowl, in "Information, Please!" a comedy by Jane Cowl and Jane Murfin. Shortly after, Roi Cooper Megrue's "Tea for Three," a comedy in three acts, will be presented at a Broadway theatre.

Cosmo Hamilton's comedy, "She Burnt Her Fingers," tried out early last month at Washington with conspicuous success, will follow "Tea for Three." A well known star will play the title rôle. Late in September, or early in October, "The Crowded Hour," a new play by Edgar Selwyn and Channing Pollock, will come into New York. Still another play may be presented about the same time.

The firm, in association with Adolph Lauber, will also present "Helen With the High Hand," a comedy founded on story of the same title by Arnold Bennett. Estelle Winwood will be seen in the title rôle.

A Benefit To-night

A benefit will be given at the Astor Theatre to-night by the chorus of the Astor Theatre, under the auspices of the Stage Women's War Relief, for the Convalescent Home for Soldiers and Sailors.

Besides the girls from "Hitchy-Koo," "Going Up," "The Rainbow Girl," "The Century Roof," "The Kiss Burglar," and "Rock-a-Bye Baby," there will be at least one hundred others. Frankie Bailey will appear in a specialty. A sketch specially written for the occasion is "Showing Up the Principals," in which six girls will appear.

